

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 052665
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TO AMEMBASSY LONDON

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS:SOCI, TBIO, SWEL, UK

SUBJECT:ALCOHOLISM AND FETAL ALCOHOLISM SYNDROME (FAS)

REFERENCE: LONDON 2291, 9 FEBRUARY

1. THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON ALCOHOL ABUSE AND ALCOHOLISM, ALCOHOL, DRUG ABUSE, AND MENTAL HEALTH ADMINISTRATION, PHS, DHEW, IS CURRENTLY SUPPORTING SEVERAL RESEARCH PROJECTS ON INTRA-UTERINE EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL ON THE FETUS. RECENT RESEARCH HAS REPORTED OBSERVATIONS ON INFANTS BORN TO ALCOHOLIC MOTHERS. THESE OFFSPRING WERE CHARACTERIZED BY A PATTERN OF ANOMALIES OF MENTAL AND PHYSICAL RETARDATION, INCLUDING CRANIOFACIAL, LIMB AND CARDIOVASCULAR DEFECTS. THE STUDIES ATTRIBUTE THESE EFFECTS TO THE MOTHER'S ALCOHOLISM.

2. FROM SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE, PRIMARILY FROM ANIMAL STUDIES, AN ASSOCIATION BETWEEN HEAVY ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION DURING UNCLASSIFIED

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PREGNANCY AND FETAL ABNORMALITIES IS ASSUMED BY NIAAA, BUT WHETHER THIS IS CAUSED BY THE DIRECT ACTION OF ALCOHOL ON THE FETUS IS NOT CLEAR. CURRENT ANIMAL STUDIES WITH DOGS, MICE, RABBITS, RATS AND SWINE INDICATE COMPELLING EVIDENCE OF AN ASSOCIATION BETWEEN HEAVY ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION DURING PREGNANCY AND FETAL UNDERWEIGHT AND ABNORMALITIES.

3. TO DATE, HUMAN STUDIES HAVE NOT CONCLUSIVELY RULED OUT THE CONTRIBUTION OF NUMEROUS VARIABLES SUCH AS NUTRITION, GENETICS, HIGH CAFFEINE INTAKE, HEAVY SMOKING, AND OTHER KINDS OF DRUG ADDICTION TO THE FETAL ALCOHOL SYNDROME (FAS). SOME CRITICS HAVE SUGGESTED THAT MANY OF THE ANOMALIES IDENTIFIED IN THE FAS MAY BE THE RESULT OF MALNUTRITION, VITAMIN DEFICIENCY, OR OTHER DEBILITATING CONSEQUENCES OF ALCOHOLISM RATHER THAN OF THE ALCOHOL ITSELF. NIAAA WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT RESEARCH IN THIS AREA.

4. ALTHOUGH MUCH MORE RESEARCH IS NEEDED, NIAAA SUGGESTS THAT PREGNANT WOMEN SHOULD BE INFORMED ABOUT THIS POSSIBILITY AND ADVISED AGAINST EXCESSIVE USE OF ALCOHOL DURING PREGNANCY.
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Disposition Case Number: n/a
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